

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Governance Committee– 10 July 2013

Report of the: Deputy Chief Executive

Status: For decision

Key Decision: Yes

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Fleming

Head of Service Head of Legal – Mrs Christine Nuttall

Recommendations to Governance Committee:

- (a) that, with effect from 7th May 2015, the number of councillors for the revised parish of Shoreham shall be 8; and
- (b) that the number of councillors representing the Shoreham Ward of Shoreham Parish Council shall be 7 and the number representing The Well Hill Hundreds Ward of Shoreham Parish Council shall be 1.
- (c) that, with effect from 7th May 2015, the number of councillors of the new Badgers Mount Parish Council shall be 5 (unwarded).

Reason for recommendation: the District Council is responsible for determining submissions made in consequence of a community governance review.

Introduction

- 1 The District Council completed a community governance review in 2012 which included the creation of a new parish of Badgers Mount in 2015, which is currently a ward of the Shoreham Parish Council.
- 2 Officers have begun the process which will require this council to make an Order under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, prior to 1st April 2015.

Background

- 3 There are a number of specific decisions which have to be made to complete the Order. Part of these is to agree the membership numbers and warding arrangements of both the new Badgers Mount Parish Council and the residual Shoreham Parish Council.

- 4 Officers have met with representatives of both Shoreham Parish Council and the Badgers Mount Residents Association (who initially proposed the separation of Badgers Mount under the Community Governance Review), together with relevant District Council Members. These meetings were to brief the parties involved and Cllr Grint attended both meetings.
- 5 At these meetings issues around the current ward boundaries were raised, together with the possibility of a new “East Hill” ward for the residual Shoreham Parish Council. None of these had been discussed as part of the Community Governance Review and there has been no consultation on the merits or otherwise of these ideas.
- 6 On this basis the proposals contained in this report are based on the existing wards, with these further issues being re-visited later.
- 7 The current Shoreham Parish Council is formed as follows:
- | | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Badgers Mount Ward | 3 members |
| Shoreham Ward | 6 members |
| Well Hill Ward | 1 member |
- 8 Shoreham Parish Council have formally recommended the following:
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Badgers Mount Parish Council | 5 members |
| Residual Shoreham Parish Council: | |
| Shoreham Ward | 6 members |
| Well Hill Ward | 1 member |
| East Hill Ward (new) | 1 member |
- 9 The Local Government Act 1972 specifies that each parish council must have at least five councillors; there is no maximum. There are no rules relating to the allocation of those councillors between parish wards but each ward must have at least one parish councillor.
- 10 National research in the early 1990s found that the typical parish council representing between 501 and 2,500 electors (presently the electorates of the Shoreham and The Well Hill Hundreds wards are 904 and 210 respectively) had between 6 and 12 councillors. The Boundary Commission are of the view that each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities.

Recommendation

- 11 It is suggested that Badgers Mount Parish Council should have the minimum 5 members. There is no practical need for warding of the Council.

- 12 Given the earlier comments relating to the deferment of consideration of a separate ward for East Hill, the suggestion for the residual Shoreham Parish Council is for 8 members (7 Shoreham Ward, 1 Well Hill Ward)
- 13 This would increase the number of members of those two wards from the current level of 7, but in reality all of the amenities of the existing Council are in Shoreham (virtually no assets in Badgers Mount) and they have very busy Planning and Amenities sub-committees.
- 14 The suggestion would seem sound in order to be able to deal with their current level of business.
- 15 Shoreham Parish Council's proposal is in keeping with guidance and ought to secure effective local government. It is therefore recommended that the District Council approves the proposal.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no cost implications for the District Council in conducting a community governance review apart from staff resources.

Community Impact and Outcomes

The District Council believes that parish councils play an important role in terms of community empowerment at the local level and is keen to ensure that parish governance in the Sevenoaks District continues to be robust, representative and enabled to meet the challenges ahead.

Legal, Human Rights etc.

There are no legal or human rights implications in this report.

Equality Impacts

Part of the purpose of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 is to ensure that from time to time a review of boundaries is undertaken to bring about better local democracy and fair representation within communities. The review therefore has a positive contribution to promoting equality.

Risk Assessment Statement

District Councils are expected to carry out community governance reviews every 10-15 years. Had the opportunity not been taken now, staff resources would not have been available until 2018, the next year of no scheduled elections.

Background Papers:

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

The Local Government Act 1972

Guidance on community governance reviews
(published jointly by the Department for
Communities and Local Government and the Local
Government Boundary Commission for England) -
2008

Contact Officer(s):

Ian Bigwood – ext. no. 7242

Dr. Pav Ramewal

Chief Executive Designate